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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 000508

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SUBJECT: TRANS-SAHARAN COUNTERTERRORISM PARTNERSHIP (TSCTP)
CHIEFS OF DEFENSE (CHOD) CONFERENCE: CAUTIOUSLY MOVING
FORWARD

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JANICE L. JACOBS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, C AND D)

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SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) (C) The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Chiefs of Defense (CHODs) and the EUCOM Deputy Commander met in Dakar on February 6 and 7. There was general agreement that terrorism in North and West Africa is linked with organized crime, including illegal migration and trafficking in persons, arms, drugs and other contraband. Participants also agreed that military means alone will not eliminate the terrorist threat. Senegal requested more sophisticated training; many countries requested equipment and technical support. Mali and Morocco offered to host the next annual meeting. The U.S. urged other TSCTP nations to assume more leadership, but African partners currently prefer to proceed more slowly. Nonetheless, there are a growing number of examples of cooperation. This reluctance to move forward with a cooperative approach reflects an historic preference for bilateral security cooperation arrangements -- either with the U.S. or with neighbors. However, this type of forum encourages progress on regional cooperation, which is an important subject for reflection at the Regional Security Initiative (RSI) conference in Dakar on March 13.
END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (U) Military and civilian leaders from all TSCTP member countries -- Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, and the United States -- attended the third annual Chiefs of Defense conference in Dakar on February 6 and 7, 2007. EUCOM Deputy Commander William &Kip8 Ward led the U.S. delegation, which included representatives from EUCOM, SOCOM, the Department of State, USAID, and U.S. embassies. The theme of the conference was determined by the partner nations during the Delegate's Conference held in Stuttgart, Germany in December 2006: Strengthening the Trans-Sahara Partnership through Greater Cooperation to Better Combat Terrorism. There were two main discussion points that were recommended by the Delegates for the conference: Information Sharing and Interoperability through training and exercises.

[¶3.](#) (U) There was broad agreement on a number of points:

-- The scourge of terrorism cannot be solved by military action alone. Poverty, underemployment, and lack of development create fertile ground for terrorist recruitment,

and these problems, prevalent in the trans-Sahara region, must be considered and addressed in any discussion of terrorism. The creation of stable, secure, and prosperous countries will make the region inhospitable to terrorists.

-- In the region, terrorism is inextricably linked with organized crime, including banditry, alien smuggling and illegal migration, and trafficking in persons, guns, drugs and other contraband. Profits from these illicit activities fund terrorist organizations and activities.

-- Counterterrorism efforts in the region are complicated by logistical and geographic challenges, including porous borders, large expanses of uninhabited land, and lack of resources to detect, monitor, and combat terrorists.

-- There are numerous examples of successful bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region. Continued cooperation and more multilateral efforts will be necessary to successfully continue to combat terrorism.

14. (C) The partners made a number of noteworthy points:

-- Senegal's Papa Sarr expressed gratitude for the U.S. military's antiterrorism training in Dakar but pointed out that some elements of the 2006 session were too basic to be useful to the Senegalese participants. He recommended more consultation before the next training session to maximize the productivity of future sessions.

-- Chadian General Adoum Gabgalia spoke about the threat that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida pose to Chad and the region.

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-- The Mauritanian delegation began its presentation by proclaiming the importance of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

-- The Moroccan presentation emphasized the Kingdom's strong response to prior terrorist acts and current preparedness to combat terrorism. The Inspector General of the Moroccan armed forces chief suggested that his country would be willing to host a future TSCTP conference.

-- Nigerian CHOD General Martin Agwai spoke at length about the events in the Delta as terrorist activity. He opined that by the end of the summer 2007, the Nigerian Armed Forces would be able to confront any group in Nigeria without fear.

15. (SBU) The discussion on the way ahead centered on combined regionally oriented exercises like Flintlock. The American delegation proposed the formation of a multinational counterterrorism coordination center, to be permanently staffed by representatives of each TSCTP country. This center would provide a venue for TSCTP nations to communicate, share information, and develop operational plans. Certain authorities could be delegated to this center, allowing for immediate action in time-sensitive situations. Reaction to the American proposal was positive but cautious. Most other nations agreed in principle with the concept of a multinational coordination center, but they stressed the need to follow proper channels and to establish the legal basis for such a center before implementation. When asked directly if his delegation would propose a specific plan to implement such a center, the Moroccan representative replied "If the Government of Morocco receives an official request through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." This temporizing was echoed by representatives from Mauritania, Mali, and Algeria.

16. (C) In addition to (possibly pro forma) procedural concerns, some of the reluctance to move forward can be attributed to hesitation at such a cooperative approach, if not actual tensions between conference participants. Several of the delegations cited positive examples of prior security

cooperation between specific nations but stopped short of proposing a center as the American delegation suggested. The Mauritanian delegation, in particular, called for 18 centers first, suggesting a marked lack of enthusiasm for working with the larger TSCTP group. As another indication of disagreement among participants, Algeria's delegation also stated that in 2006, Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) camps were present in northern Mali, a statement quickly rebutted by the Malian delegates, who offered to host the next conference. Rather than discussing cooperation, the Tunisian delegation instead described a successful raid its security forces had conducted on a terrorist training camp, giving the impression of a country able and preferring to go it alone. However, the Tunisian operation also profited from intelligence sharing from the Algerians, illustrating the potential of what the Partnership can do together when its members trust each other enough to share intelligence.

¶17. (U) There were, however, clear openings for progress. Most participants expressed a desire/need for resources, whether in the form of training, technical support, or various forms of equipment: communications equipment, air capacity, night combat capability, armed Land Rovers, and air units. The Tunisians and Moroccans, rather than asking for equipment, asked for real-time intelligence. The Chadian representative stated it most bluntly: "Give us the money; we have the courage to do the job."

¶18. (C) The U.S. delegation explained the value of a Joint Operations Center for the next Flintlock and Silent Warrior exercises. That discussion, in turn, led to discussions of a potential permanent international center to counter terrorist activity. General Ward said in his closing remarks, "The next step is to secure the political commitment from each of your governments to move forward" for the other delegations clearly did not want to commit themselves to such a move at this time.

COMMENT

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¶19. (C) The American delegation's proposal for the formation of a multinational counterterrorism coordination center, however, was a follow-up to the center that was discussed at the previous CHOD Conference that was held in Malta in April 2006, and follows the delegates' theme of Information Sharing and Interoperability through training and exercises. The center could be used during the regional exercises that EUCOM proposed as an important tool to build regional cooperation. One way of initiating this process would be through regional training events, such as Flintlock and Silent Warrior, where a regional coordination center could be rehearsed and vetted and implementing issues identified. These exercises would form a multinational coordination cell that would synchronize counterterrorism operations driven by the exercise scenario. Intelligence and planning teams from all of the TSCTP nations would provide information to the regional exercise headquarters and distribute information and plans to their respective Ministries of Defense.

¶10. (C) Continuing to provide material support to TSCTP member nations will go a long way toward ensuring that attendees at this conference work domestically to develop this commitment. The Tunisian operation points to what is possible for the Partnership when partner nations find it in their own interest to share intelligence and to work together to protect their respective populations from the threat of terrorism. Based on this conference, Morocco offers promise as a potential leader nation within the Partnership. END
COMMENT.

¶11. (U) General Ward has cleared this message.

¶12. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's classified website at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.
JACOBS